

In which these guidelines have a limited applicability. However, as soon as information about the fire and its impact on Indian pilgrims was made known to the Government on the afternoon of April 15, our Mission in Riyadh and the Consulate General in Jeddah were issued instructions to take all possible steps for relief and assistance to the injured pilgrims. The mission set up control rooms in Jeddah, Mecca and Riyadh to collect and disseminate the information on the casualties, and to co-ordinate the relief work and to handle enquiries from the relatives of the pilgrims. On the night of April 15 itself, food and drinking water was arranged for over 5,000 pilgrims. On subsequent days, a comprehensive routine was developed by the mission to (i) visit the morgue near Mina with relatives of the missing/dead to help identify the dead; (ii) daily visits to all the hospitals in Mecca and Mina by the Indian medical mission to ascertain position regarding the Indians injured; (iii) setting up of a special dressing room for burns in the main dispensary at Mecca; (iv) making arrangements in all the nine branch dispensaries in Mecca for the treatment of the injured; (v) daily visits by doctors of Indian medical mission to all the buildings housing Indian pilgrims in Mecca; (vi) rendering assistance to indigent pilgrims through the Indian pilgrims Welfare Forum, Jeddah, which is a voluntary organization of resident Indians.

(e) and (f) A four member team comprising of three MPs and one former MP with experience in Haj matters visited Saudi Arabia from April 25–May 1 to enquire after the welfare of the pilgrims particularly the injured, and next of kin and to advise on further relief measures as well as to take stock of the overall situation regarding missing pilgrims. The team visited the site of the fire and the injured pilgrims receiving treatment in the hospitals, met other pilgrims and had discussions with the Saudi officials concerned with the Haj arrangement and Indian Ambassador and the Consul General. The team's recommendation for immediate disbursement of financial relief to the injured being treated in Saudi Arabia and grant of ex-gratia relief of rupees one lakh to the permanently disabled have been accepted. The teams report including its other recommendations are under the consideration of the Government. Earlier an official team led by Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs visited Jeddah on April 17-20 to assess the situation and to supervise relief measures required.

Foreign Exchange

*448. SHRI UTTAMSINGH PAWAR : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of persons who have surrendered foreign exchange during the last three years as required under Section 14 of FERA;

(b) whether the Government have set up any machinery to identify the law violators;

(c) if so, the details thereof and the number of persons identified and prosecuted during the above period;

(d) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(e) the steps proposed to be taken by the Government to check illegal accumulation of foreign exchange?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) Data in this regard are not being separately generated.

(b) to (d) A separate department namely the Enforcement Directorate is there to deal with the violators of the provisions of the Foreign Exchange Regulations Act, 1973 (FERA). Number of persons prosecuted in the courts for violations of the provisions of the FERA during the last three years are as under:

Year	Number of prosecutions launched
1994	264
1995	202
1996	101

(e) The Government, through its enforcement agencies, keeps a regular check on illegal accumulation of foreign exchange.

Currency Notes and Coins

*449. SHRI JAGDAMBI PRASAD YADAV : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) the number of currency notes and coins of different denominations which are in circulation in the country;

(b) whether the Government monitor the position of currency notes and coins of different denomination;

(c) if so, the details of the currency notes and coins which are in short supply; and

(d) the steps taken to fulfil the demand of such denomination currency notes and coins?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) The currency notes and coins

in circulation at the end of March, 1997 are as under :

Denomination	Currency notes (in million pieces)	Coins
Re. 1	3201	8960
Rs. 2	2765	1444
Rs. 5	3480	963
Rs. 10	10056	—
Rs. 20	378	—
Rs. 50	7122	—
Rs. 100	6081	—
Rs. 500	495	—

(b) The Reserve Bank of India monitors the position of currency notes and coins in different denominations.

(c) There is a general shortage of currency notes and coins of various denominations due to the limited production of note printing presses and mints.

(d) The note printing presses at Dewas and Nasik are being modernised to augment their capacity. The Reserve Bank of India has set up its own note printing presses at Mysore (Karnataka) and Salbani (West Bengal). With the modernisation of the Government presses at Nasik and Dewas and full capacity production at the RBI presses at Mysore and Salbani by the year 1998-99, the supply position of notes will improve considerably. Reserve Bank of India is also, as a one-time measure, getting currency notes (Rs. 100-2000 million pieces and Rs. 500-1600 million pieces) printed abroad to meet the demand-supply gap till the year 2000. Government mints at Calcutta, Hyderabad and Mumbai are being modernised. The supply position of coins will improve after modernisation by March, 1998. Government has decided to import coins (Re. 1 - 700 million pieces and Rs. 2- 300 million pieces) to improve supply position.

Indians in Kuwait and Iraq Jails

*450. SHRI E. AHAMED : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Indians in jails of Kuwait and Iraq as a result of Gulf war between them;

(b) the details of charges against these Indians; and

(c) the steps taken or proposed to be taken by Government to get these Indians released?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP) : (a) Nil.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Right to Information

*452. SHRI G.A. CHARAN REDDY : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the working group constituted by the Government to study the issues connected with the right to information and promoting open and transparent Government, has submitted its report to the Government;

(b) if so, the main recommendations thereof;

(c) the number of recommendations accepted by the Government;

(d) the steps being taken to implement these recommendations;

(e) whether the Chairperson of the Press Council has also drafted a Bill for right to information and whether the draft has been sent to the Government; and

(f) if so, the action taken or proposed to be taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI S.R. BALASUBRAMONYAN) : (a) No, sir.

(b) to (d) Do not arise, in view of (a) above.

(e) and (f) A draft Bill on Right to Information received from the Chairperson of the Press Council was made available to the Working Group on Right to Information for consideration during its deliberations.

Violation of Customs Rules

*453. SHRI MANIKRAO HODLYA GAVIT : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) the number of foreigners arrested in India during the last two years and upto March, 1997 for violating customs rules and smuggling;

(b) the names of the countries to which these foreigners belonged;

(c) the corresponding figures for the years 1994 and 1995; and

(d) the details of the preventive measures taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) to (d) 372 foreigners were arrested in India during the last two years and upto March, 1997 for violating Customs Rules including smuggling. 196 & 168 foreigners were arrested in the year 1994 & 1995 respectively for similar violations.

The arrested foreigners belong to various countries including Afghanistan, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Canada, Denmark, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Germany, Greece, Holland, Iran, Jordan, Kenya, Myanmar, Malaysia,